

INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION
1313 EAST 60TH STREET - CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS

Route To: Aug-'46

This report was prepared in response to an inquiry from a municipality subscribing to this Service and is distributed to all subscribers. The contents may not be reproduced without permission.

Return To:

EMPLOYEE SERVICE FOLDERS AND RECORD CARDS

What type of information should be kept about each municipal employee for use in day-to-day administration?

One of the most important personnel records is a roster or service record card for each employee because it summarizes the personnel actions from the date of entry to date of separation. All officers and employees should be included, regardless of department, civil service status, method of selection, or pay period. A service record card should be carefully designed and the procedures for its installation, maintenance, and use accurately drawn. It should show information which the administrator should have readily available. But not all of the information about an individual employee can be put on a service record card. Official papers such as application forms, examination papers, personnel action forms, classification questionnaires, and correspondence can be kept in a service folder for each employee.

Employee's Service Folder

The employee's service folder holds the original forms or records which supply data to be posted on the service record card. For example, the service folder contains the employee's service rating sheets while the record card shows only the rating and date. Likewise, with regard to any change in status, the service folder contains reports giving detailed incidents about the change, while the service card shows only summary data. Thus the service folder might contain information on the type of separation (layoff, dismissal, suspension, resignation, retirement, or death) and the reason. These service folders for individual employees can be filed in straight alphabetical order, and when an employee leaves the service the folder can be transferred to a dead file.

Employee's Service Record Card

Service cards are used primarily for reference purposes; they serve as a guide to essential facts contained in the service folder and elsewhere. These records also are useful to the administrator because they show for each employee a complete record of changes in status, length of service, pay, attendance, and so on. Service records provide data useful in publicity and public relations. They are also useful in determining the order of layoff and reemployment because of the record of past performance as shown by service rating, length of service, nature of work, etc. The use of visible equipment for these records makes readily available a comprehensive picture of the number and titles of positions and rates of pay in each organization unit; this is especially useful at the time of preparing the annual budget.

Types of Information. The employee's service record card usually shows information of reference value about each employee. In deciding what information to show on the card some items to consider are:

1. Name, date of birth, sex, address, and telephone number.
2. Title of position held, name of department and division, full or part-time position, date of original appointment.

(OVER)

3. Rate of pay and record of changes.
4. Education and military service.
5. Marital status and number of dependents; whom to notify in case of accident.
6. Nature of changes in status as a result of promotions, transfer, resignation, dismissal, etc., and dates of such changes.
7. Character of performance as shown by service ratings.
8. Number of days annual leave and other types of leaves taken.
9. Other kinds of work that employee can perform.

Some cities may not want to show all of this information as some of it may not apply or may better be filed in the service folder. It may be desirable to provide space for code reference to in-service training taken, with details shown on a separate record in the service folder or elsewhere.

Perhaps most of the information needed for service cards can be secured from payroll records and from applications, examinations, and other records kept by department heads or by the personnel office. In many instances it may be necessary to ask employees to fill out a special questionnaire.

Type of Equipment. Service record cards usually are 4 x 6 or 5 x 8 inches in size. The cards are easiest to use when filed by the "visible" method rather than by the index card type commonly associated with a library catalog. Visible filing equipment is generally of three types: (1) separate hangar, such as the Acme or Globe-Wernicke equipment; (2) pocket equipment, such as the Kardex system of Remington-Rand; and (3) multiple-post, loose-leaf-equipment. The size and design of the records may depend to some extent on the type of equipment used. For this reason equipment should be obtained at the time the records are prepared. Manufacturers of the equipment selected can make suggestions on the design of the record card.

Whether the record is to be of paper weight, foldover style for filing in visible file pockets, or of card weight, single and fastened at the top, is partly a matter of personal preference and partly a question of the amount of information to be entered on the card. The pocket-type form has the advantage of containing more space, and some officials believe it is cheaper to maintain and easier to handle in entering supplementary data. The separate pocket-type equipment also makes it possible to maintain a complete record of persons who have previously held the position, together with the date each was appointed, date separated, and reason. These position-record forms, however, often are kept in a separate file by organization unit.

Among the many cities which have installed visible-type service record cards are Dearborn and Saginaw (Michigan), San Diego, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Louisville, and St. Louis. In New York State the municipal service bureau of the state department of civil service has prepared two suggested service cards, both of the visible type, one for a postbinder and the other the pocket type.

The service record card used in Saginaw, Michigan, reproduced as a supplement to this report, is typical of the best systems in use. Colored tabs are attached to the bottom of the card (see front side of card) to show probation and pay data. When an employee starts work a red tab shows the month and green tab the day when his six-month probation period will end. A yellow tab shows the month in which his first two months on the job will expire, at which time a rating sheet is sent to the department for a rating and the tab set ahead another two months for the next rating. In the case of patrolmen and firemen

who receive automatic increases at the end of one and two years, colored tabs are used to indicate the date such raises go into effect.

On the Saginaw card the figures brought forward show accumulated sick and annual leave. John Doe at the beginning of 1945 had 50 days accumulated sick leave and 10 days vacation leave. (In Saginaw sick leave is accumulated up to 60 days at the rate of 10 days per year and annual leave is on a calendar year basis and is taken the next year after it is earned). The postings under X show the number of days worked in each half-month pay period and postings under symbols show the number of days absent for different reasons.

The secretary of the personnel advisory board in Saginaw reports that the items "relatives in municipal service" and "date married" on reverse side are seldom used. The signature of the employee is the official signature and in some cases the only signature, and when necessary, payroll receipts and other signed forms are checked against this signature. Every change in the employee's status is posted on the bottom part of the reverse side; the last column shows who authorized the change.

A unique vertical card record used in Jefferson County (Birmingham), Alabama, is a "speed-sort" filing system. Slits and holes punched in the edge of the cards make it possible to remove cards from the file for various purposes merely by punching a needle or wire through the holes in all the cards in a vertical file. The cards can be pulled quickly for any purpose, such as type of position, educational qualifications, results on examinations, service ratings, position classification, etc. The card itself shows the name, address, telephone number, date of birth, examination data, and space for remarks.

Maintenance of Service Records. Record cards which are prepared for a visible-type system probably should carry the name of the employee at the top as well as at the bottom of the card, so that it can be taken out of the visible file and put in a vertical card file for employees separate from the service or when a card is filled up. The last name should be typed first in capital letters, followed by the first name and middle initial or name. The visible portion at the bottom of the card generally shows the name and title of the employee, and current rate of pay. Symbols can be used to indicate weekly, daily, or hourly rate, to distinguish from the normal semi-monthly or monthly rate.

Changes in status of the employee are typed on the card, such as changes in title, changes in rate of pay, promotions, transfers from one position or one organization unit to another, layoff, suspension, extended leaves, dismissals, and retirements. In connection with each action sufficient information should be given to make it possible to locate the original record contained in the service folder or elsewhere. If the employee receives full or partial maintenance, this fact can be shown by symbols after the pay rate. Method of appointment, separation, and other personnel actions are most easily shown by means of symbols such as "LO" for layoff, "TR" for transfer, and "DM" for demotion. Sometimes a full code of such symbols is printed on the card itself, but this is not necessary and may be handled more effectively by means of code copies in the hands of those using the service cards.

It seems desirable to devote considerable space to an attendance record, including annual leave, sick leave with pay, all types of leave without pay, and suspensions for disciplinary purposes. These data can be secured from reports filed by department heads for each payroll period (see Saginaw form). It may be desirable also to provide space for days or hours of overtime.

Leave of absence record may be entered in two ways, on space provided for that purpose on the service card, or on an extra sheet which can be folded over the regular card. The latter method has three advantages, i. e. (1) it can be designed to cover a longer period than would be possible on a portion of the service card; (2) even when the space is all used up it will not necessitate the re-entry of permanent data on a new card; and (3) by placing the leave of absence record on top of the service card during a leave extending beyond a single pay period, one can tell at a glance who is away from duty at any particular time.

The Saginaw form provides space for recording service ratings for five years. Even though a city may not be using service ratings, space might well be left for such information on the assumption that such ratings would be started within the period covered by the card.

Checking Payrolls. Some cities provide space on service cards for checking the correctness of payrolls. This should not be necessary in cities where payrolls are handled by a central office and where a machine tabulating system is used. In such cities the payroll office makes changes only upon specific authorization from the personnel agency. It may be desirable, however, to check payrolls with the service cards occasionally. The payroll office also may make occasional spot checks of departmental payrolls and attendance records.

In some small cities where the personnel service record cards are kept in the city manager's office, two personnel cards are prepared, one for the manager's office and one for the finance office. The finance officer makes vouchers for salaries and wages indicated on certified copies of the service card supplied by the city manager except in cases where employees are paid overtime or when the excess amounts are approved in writing by the city manager.

Filing. Cities that have more than 100 employees may find it desirable to file the cards by major departments or divisions, arranging the individual cards alphabetically by name of employee within these divisions. If this is done, it is advisable to keep an alphabetical file of employees' names and their places of employment to facilitate the location of the record of any employee. This file would serve as a cross index to the service card. If the Kardex system is used, a series of chainindex or similar cards could be used for this alphabetic record. When an employee leaves the service his service card is transferred to a dead file where the cards are arranged in a vertical file in straight alphabetical order according to name of employee without reference to organization unit.

A final consideration is the assignment of someone to install and maintain the record cards. If there is centralized personnel administration, the responsibility should rest there. If personnel administration is primarily the responsibility of the manager, either directly or through an assistant, the records should be maintained in the office of the manager by an assistant or secretary. Wherever the service cards are kept, information on them should be available to the manager.

NOTE: Cities subscribing to MIS may secure on request a copy of a typical questionnaire for use in securing data from individual employees as a basis for preparing service record cards.

